



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Forest  
Service

Sawtooth National Forest  
Ketchum Ranger District

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Denis and Laurie Kowitz  
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**2015 Annual Operating Instructions  
For Denis and Laurie Kowitz  
Sheep and Goat Allotments  
Administered by the  
Ketchum Ranger District  
Sawtooth National Forest**

**Permit # 3029**

**Prepared and recommended by: Bill Whitaker, Range Management Specialist**

Approved by:

**District Ranger**

Date **7-21-2015**



## Annual Operating Instructions 2015

### INTRODUCTION

**Permittee:** Denis and Laurie Kowitz

**Allotments Included:** Warm Springs and Deer Creek/Curran S&G

**Permitted Numbers and Seasons:**

Numbers	Season	Allotment/Head Months
Variable numbers and season. Not to exceed 3923 head months. Not to exceed 1100 mature sheep and 2500 total sheep (ewes + lambs). 4 horses	6/16-9/30     6/16-9/30	Warm Springs S&G/ 3923 Head Months
Variable numbers and season. Not to exceed 1870 head months. Band not to exceed 850 mature sheep and 2500 total animals (ewes + lambs) 2 horses	6/16-8/20     6/16-8/20	Deer Creek/Curran S&G/ 1870 Head Months

**Authorized Season of Use and Numbers for 2015:**

**As discussed due the Deer Creek/Curran Deer allotment will be totally rested again this year due to the 2013 Beaver Creek fire. The Warm Springs allotment which was partially burned during the Beaver Creek fire is authorized for use again this year with a shortened season of use and limited to the areas on the allotment which did not burn as described in this AOI.**

Allotment	Numbers	Season	Head Months
Deer Creek/Curran	rest	Resource protection non-use	
Warm Springs*	900 Ewe 3 horses	8/12-9/30 8/12-9/30	1479

## **BILLING**

**Confirmation of payment of fees through the Lock Box in San Francisco must be received prior to livestock entering the allotment.** For the purpose of accountability, please contact Robert Garcia or Bill Whitaker five days prior to entering the allotment.

## **LIVESTOCK MANAGEMENT**

Emphasis will be placed upon once-over light use while grazing the band on the allotments. Carefully review with your herders the **Terms and Conditions** section of this document which contains specific management standards, guidelines, conditions and practices found in the amended 2012 Sawtooth National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) as well as your Term Grazing Permit.

Reminder: All livestock feed or straw brought on to the Forest is to be certified noxious weed free.

Specific instructions or management actions, such as routing, or areas to avoid will be found in the sections of this AOI specific to the allotment and the band that uses it.

### **Deer Creek/Curran Allotment**

The entire Deer Creek/Curran allotment which burned during the 2013 Beaver Creek fire will continue to be rested this year for resource protection. Recovery assessments and monitoring will continue this year to more fully determine conditions on the allotment and recovery.

### **Warm Springs Allotment**

As you are aware significant portions of the Warm Springs allotment burned during the Beaver Creek fire. The burned areas will continue to be rested. Please reference the AOI map which depicts the burned areas of the allotment which are to be avoided by the sheep. As we discussed sufficient area on the allotment was not burned and can be grazed. Grazing the un-burned portions of the allotment will require a reduced season of use, and routing changes as described below. As discussed this spring access to and from the allotment will continue to require trucking the band onto the allotment and off the allotment at the end of the season. The band can be trucked onto the allotment and un-loaded like last year approximately ½ mile east of Rooks Creek on the north side of Warm Springs road or the band can be un-loaded at the mouth of the West Fork of Warm Springs if you determine that the site is adequate to allow the trucks to turn around and there is adequate area close by up the West Fork of Warm Springs for the lambs to mother up. When leaving the allotment the band is authorized to trail across un-burned portions of the adjoining Limekiln allotment (above the burned area) and trail down Limekiln Gulch road which runs through a small portion of the burned area in order to ship from the corrals in lower Limekiln Gulch. Sheep will be restricted to the road as much as possible when

trailing to the corrals and confined immediately in the corrals. Trucking off the allotment at the end of the season will eliminate the potential of any impacts by the sheep on private property in the lower portions of Greenhorn Gulch which burned during the Beaver Creek fire.

**The grazing rotation for the 2015 season on the Warm Springs allotment shall be as follows:**

The band of 900 ewes with lambs will be trucked onto the allotment on 8/12. The band will unload approximately ½ mile east of Rooks Creek on Warm Springs road, or at the junction of the West Fork of Warm Springs and Warm Springs road. The band will initially graze north of Warm Springs Creek between the Rooks Creek drainage and the West Fork of Warm Springs. When this area is grazed to standard the band will cross Warm Springs Creek and graze easterly across the un-named drainages that did not burn last year that are east of Rough Canyon to Warfield Creek. When the Warfield drainage is grazed to standard the band will then graze the Red Warrior Creek drainage to the headwaters of Lodgepole Gulch in the Greenhorn Gulch drainage. The band will then graze Lodgepole Gulch and the upper portion of the Mahoney Creek drainage to finish the season and will be trucked off the Forest from the corrals located at the mouth of Limekiln Gulch on 9/30. When leaving the allotment the band is authorized to trail across the Limekiln allotment. When trailing across the Limekiln allotment the band will trail across the Cow Creek drainage to the Limekiln Gulch drainage trailing north of and above that portion of the Limekiln allotment that burned last year (reference AOI map). The band is authorized to trail down Limekiln Gulch road on the Forest which runs through a small portion of the burned area in order to ship at the corrals in lower Limekiln Gulch. Sheep will be restricted to the road as much as possible when trailing down Limekiln Gulch to the corrals and confined immediately in the corrals. Trailing across the Limekiln Gulch allotment will be limited to two days with the sheep shipping on the second day. Reference the allotment map for general routing information and specific direction regarding these instructions.

- **Please inform my range staff well in advance of the sheep arriving to the allotment so that signage informing the public of this activity can be put into place prior to the sheep arriving.**
- **It may be necessary to haul water if the band will be using the West Fork of Warm Springs and again in Limekiln Gulch at the end of the season.**
- **Management of sheep within the Warm Springs allotment is complex due to the challenging terrain as well as the high recreation use that occurs on the Ketchum Ranger District. It is important that you work very closely with your herders while grazing on the Warm Springs allotment and that they are well informed and understand the instructions and conditions contained within this year's AOI such as routing, avoidance of areas that burned in 2013, Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines, and Terms and Conditions of your Term Grazing Permit and these instructions.**
- **You are responsible for any damage to system trails by sheep. Be sure to emphasize this requirement to your herders. Repair any damage**

**immediately. The permittee will be held accountable for trail damage that is not immediately repaired to an acceptable standard.**

- **Conflicts with guard dogs and the public has been a problem. The herder will need to be attentive with the sheep and guard dogs to reduce conflicts, especially if in close proximity to system trails or roads. Major trails and trailheads will be posted by range staff informing the public that sheep and guard dogs are in the area. In addition signs will be given to you that can be moved with the sheep and placed by the herder in strategic locations informing the public of the proximity of sheep and guard dogs in the area. In the Mahoney Creek, Lodgepole Gulch, Red Warrior, Warfield drainages, and along Warm Springs road inform your herder to be especially attentive of the guard dogs and grazing in proximity of the busy trails and road located in these areas.**

## **COMPLIANCE**

This AOI is made part of your grazing permit consistent with Part 1, item 3 and Part 2, Item 8(a).

**Procedures for modifying this AOI:** Situations may develop during the grazing season which requires changes to these instructions. If this becomes necessary, or if you cannot comply with some part of these instructions, contact the District Ranger and obtain approval before initiating changes or deviating from these instructions.

## **REPORTING**

The permittee is required to provide timely and complete actual use information to the Forest Officer in charge upon request. Use of calendars, maps, or actual use forms provided will be utilized to record dates for turning out, shipping, leaving the allotment, as well as location and number of days of use of each camp and or prominent drainage (those identified on maps).

We need to know dates of entry into each new allotment or major drainage, noteworthy change in sheep numbers, occupied camp or band locations with dates of occupancy, periods, of use within specific drainages, and maintenance of range facilities. Please notify us of significant losses, from predators or poisonous plants, herding problems (logistical or due to unforeseen circumstances), conflicts with other Forest users, and any other grazing related information you feel is worth reporting.

Weekly reporting for trail information updates will suffice as actual use reporting with the addition of any notable changes in numbers of mature sheep. Not reporting to my range staff: (1) weekly sheep locations; and (2) intended routing patterns could prompt non-compliance procedures. Please phone my range staff Bill Whitaker (208-622-0080) or otherwise provide this information no later than Wednesday of each week. If my range staff is not available leave the information on his phone, e-mail, or provide written information to the front desk personnel at the Ketchum District office.



## INSPECTIONS AND MONITORING

Inspections will be made within each allotment to monitor grazing use and insure compliance with the direction set forth within the AOI. Standard monitoring will include visual inspections, compliance with AOI and grazing standards, photo points, and rapid assessments to estimate use and ground cover. On the Deer Creek/Curran, and Warm Springs allotments assessments and monitoring of the effects the Beaver Creek fire had on watershed conditions and recovery will continue this year.

## COOPERATION

Once again this year we will work in partnership with Blaine County, the Idaho Department of Fish & Game, the Defenders of Wildlife, and the Lava Lake Institute in fostering a non-lethal approach to preventing domestic sheep and wolf mortality. Brian Bean (208-788-1710) representing Lava Lake Institute will be the primary coordinator and contact person concerning this program. Emphasis will be on the Ketchum Ranger District, the Sawtooth National Recreation Area and other areas within Blaine County south of Galena Summit. Coordination will be important. Adjustments can be made to routing or bedding as the need arises, to head off problems. Meetings will be scheduled as necessary to assess how things are going or prevent potential problems.

Questions about what can or cannot be done in reference to defending flocks, harassing wolves, or shooting wolves should be directed to Toby Boudreau at the Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG) Regional Office in Jerome, Idaho (208-324-4359) or Jim Hayden at the Fish and Game office in Boise, Idaho (208-334-3700); Todd Grimm, USDA APHIS Wildlife Services in Boise, Idaho (208-373-1630); Todd Sullivan USDA APHIS Wildlife Services Eastern District Supervisor (208-236-6921); or local Wildlife Service's contacts. Permittee's should continue working with their local Wildlife Services representative on depredation issues.

In order to reduce the potential for depredation, the Forest Service recommends that the following procedures be implemented each grazing season:

- *Keep camp meat in coolers, and not hung.*
- *Burn, bury, or pack out food leftovers, bones, garbage etc. including food not consumed by dogs accompanying the herders.*
- *Bury or remove sheep and saddle stock carcasses from the area where they will not serve as an attractant to predators. The intent of this recommendation is not to require removal of carcasses from the allotment, but to remove them out of areas currently being grazed of areas soon to be grazed.*
- *Work with Defenders field staff, IDF&G and Wildlife Services in implementing other effective preventative actions to reduce the risk of depredation.*

Contact the range staff at the Ketchum Ranger District (208-622-5371) for local Wildlife Service's contact information.

The Forest Service recognizes that you and Idaho Department of Fish & Game have developed a "Best Management Practice for Separation between Domestic Sheep and Bighorn Sheep" agreement because of the potential for conflict between wild sheep and domestics. In addition to BMP's agreed to in that agreement, we also require the herders conduct regular visual checks for bighorn sheep near the domestic sheep bands throughout the day. We also require that the herder make the appropriate contact with the Forest Service or Idaho Department of Fish & Game when a Bighorn sheep sighting is reported on or within a minimum of one mile of the Warm Springs Allotment.

We are again requiring that you provide weekly updates on sheep band locations to Bill Whitaker by Wednesday noon so that we are able to update the weekly on-line recreation trail report. This trail report along with signing to inform the public that sheep are in the area has proven successful in preventing conflicts with recreational use of the trails.

The potential of conflicts with the general public and grazing, such as trail damage, or guard dogs is especially high on the Warm Springs allotment due to the proximity of several high use recreation trails, roads, and busy trailheads. The herder will need to be attentive with the sheep and guard dogs to reduce conflicts while in these areas, especially if in close proximity to system trails or roads. The trailheads and major trails will be posted informing the public that sheep are in the area. The herder will be given additional signs that will be moved with the sheep and placed at strategic locations more proximal to the sheep in order to inform the public of the presence of sheep and guard dogs.

## **DROUGHT**

This season is shaping up to be a very dry year with below average precipitation. Drought conditions will be monitored as the season progresses. Grazing will be managed on an allotment by allotment basis focusing on water availability and soil disturbance. This year's water content in the snowpack is well below average and dry spring conditions are a concern. Due to low water content in the snowpack and dry conditions the possibility of livestock leaving the allotments early this year for resource protection is a possibility. We recommend planning for this possibility.

The dry spring conditions have increased the possibility of wildfire and this year may be similar to last season or worse. Consequently implementation of fire restrictions will be likely and we will notify you if restrictions are put in effect.

## **Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines and Grazing Permit Terms and Conditions for Sheep Grazing**

Following are the Forest Plan standards, guidelines and Grazing Permit terms, conditions and practices applicable to sheep grazing that must be followed while grazing on the Ketchum Ranger District.

These permit standards, guidelines, terms and conditions are needed to move toward or to achieve the desired conditions, goals, and objectives for vegetation, wildlife, fish, riparian, soil and water resources described by the Sawtooth Forest Land & Resource Management Plan. Other than Guidelines, the following Terms & Conditions are binding limitations placed on management actions. Guidelines represent preferred or advisable courses of action that are generally expected to be carried out.

#### Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines:

- Only one night/one time use of bed grounds is allowed. (standard)
- Only open or loose sheep herding will be practiced except where site-specific vegetation management (e.g., noxious weed control or reforestation) is needed. (standard)
- Only annual once-over sheep grazing will be allowed, with the exception of designated sheep driveways, travel routes, or where specifically authorized. (standard)
- Livestock salting will be prohibited in RCA's (riparian conservation areas). Sheep will be salted only at bed grounds. Salt will be placed in containers and moved with the sheep. Tarps and hollowed logs meet the criteria for salting in containers. (standard)
- Only certified noxious weed-free hay, straw, or feed is allowed on National Forest Systems lands. (standard)
- Earth-disturbing equipment used on National Forest System lands- such as cats, graders, and front-loaders- shall be cleaned to remove all visible plant parts, dirt, and material that may carry noxious weed seeds. Cleaning shall occur prior to entry onto the project area and again upon leaving the project area, if the project area has noxious weed infestations. (standard) No ground disturbing activities may be conducted on National forest Systems land without prior approval from the authorized officer.
- New, reconstructed, or replaced livestock water developments must provide access and escape to and from water for all types of wildlife. (standard, reference part Three of the Term Grazing Permit under maintenance of structural range improvements)
- On all lands outside of designated travelways, motorized use shall be prohibited unless otherwise authorized. (standard)
- Damage to or loss of Forest System trails from timber harvest, livestock grazing, road construction, mining, special uses, and prescribed fire activities should be repaired or mitigated by the appropriate party. (guideline)
- Sheep should be routed to avoid slopes with loose soil conditions, active gullies, and snowbank areas that have low productivity, soil puddling, and compaction conditions. (guideline, generally site specific in the AOI)



### **SHEEP HERDING:**

1. The permittee or herd manager will provide sufficient riders or herders to obtain proper distribution, protection, and management of sheep on the allotment as required by the Rangeland Project Decision (RPD)/Allotment Management Plan (AMP) and/or the Annual Operating Instructions (AOI).
2. Do not allow sheep to be shaded or bedded within 100 yards of all streams. If this is not reasonable due to topography ensure that the sheep are as far back as possible from the streambank.
3. Graze no closer than 200 yards from all lakes or ponds specified as closed to sheep grazing in Part 3 or your Term Grazing Permit. This may not apply on all allotments. Check Part 3 on your Term Grazing Permit.
4. Do not bed sheep within 200 yards of designated campgrounds, trails, trail heads, or maintained roads.
5. Graze rather than trail to water, and water at different locations each time.
6. The permittee is required to provide a copy of the Annual Operating Instructions to each herder, and to ensure each herder understands the written contents.

### **OTHER**

7. Permittees are responsible for cleaning or repairing system roads and trails damaged by sheep to the condition existing prior to trailing. Immediate action is required. (standard)
8. All predator control will be in accordance with the approved Predator Control Plan and Federal and State laws and regulations.
9. Promptly remove or bury any sheep that have died within 100 yards or in sight of administrative sites, system roads or trails, corrals or sources of water.
10. Before and after shipping, sheep will not be allowed to graze, shade, or bed within one-quarter mile of the corral. Exception: After leaving the corral, the sheep will be allowed to water one time before departing the immediate area.
11. Control guard dogs when other Forest users or pets are near by.

### **SHEEP CAMPS**

12. Each camp will be kept clean. All litter and unburned material from fire pits will be hauled away and disposed of off-Forest. Human waste must be buried if it is within 150 feet from water. The use of detergent in streams is prohibited.
13. Only existing herder camps are approved for use. New camp locations must be approved by a Forest Service officer.
14. Camps will be kept in primitive condition. No improvements will be allowed. If a new fire pit is constructed, dismantled it and restore the area before moving your camp.

15. Herder camp use will not exceed 5 days per location unless prior permission is obtained from a Forest officer. Camps should be located to avoid conflict with other Forest users
16. At camp, pack and saddle stock will be high-lined, picketed or hobbled. Tying pack or saddle stock to trees at camp is prohibited.
17. Holding pens, corrals, or mangers used for riding stock will be cleaned up when camp is moved.

#### **FIRE**

18. Employees must be kept informed of the current fire danger, situation, and the permittee's fire prevention responsibility. The Forest Service will advise the permittee when special fire restrictions become effective.
19. Exhaust from camp stoves must be filtered through a spark arrestor screen with 3/8 inch (or smaller) mesh.
20. Never leave campfires unattended.
21. Possession of an adequate shovel and bucket for fire control is required at camps.

#### **WOLF Guidelines**

22. The permittee will be contacted immediately when the district becomes aware of wolves in an area. Possible re-routing of the band may be agreed on between the permittee and the District Ranger.
23. At camp, meat will be kept in containers to avoid attracting wolves.
24. Food wastes will be burned, buried, or packed out with other camp refuse.
25. Preventive measures should be coordinated with Idaho Fish and Game.
26. Only bed sheep down for one night per bed ground under normal circumstances. When there is wolf activity in the area and fladry is used to minimize predation, bed grounds may be used for more than one night. If this situation occurs bed ground site selection needs to be discussed with the Range Management Specialist for this allotment.

#### **Improvements**

27. The permittee is responsible for the maintenance of structural range improvements as delineated on Part 3 of your Term grazing Permit. These improvements will be maintained prior to placing sheep on the allotment. Please refer to your permit for the specific maintenance standards for structural range improvements.

Sincerely,

Enclosures: Allotment Map, Spanish AOIKURT NELSON  
District Ranger